Eco-Worrier

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Body

FILM REVIEW Woman at War This gentle Scandinavian charmer feels like a fairy tale with an environmental edge, as if Hans Christian Andersen had started worrying about climate change. And like a lot of fables, it's long on feelings and short on details.

The woman of the title is Halla (Halldora Geirharsdottir) a middle-aged Icelandic music teacher. The war is her own, against globalization in general, and a local Chinese-Icelandic aluminum smelter in particular.

The opening scene finds her cutting power to the plant by shorting out a nearby electrical transmission line. In one of several running gags in writer/director Benedikt Erlingsson's second feature, a Spanish-speaking tourist in the wrong place at the wrong time is suspected of the crime. After some unnecessary detention the police tell him: "You are free to go. And welcome to Iceland!" The story builds gradually.

Halla makes an unlikely ally in the remote highlands. We meet her sister, with whom she shares several important traits. And at a crucial junction she learns that the adoption service she once signed up with has matched her with a Ukrainian orphan. It's a bit like finding out you're pregnant, four years after a one-night stand.

Meanwhile, the authorities are gradually closing in on the self-proclaimed "Mountain Woman," and local citizens are lining up for and against the eco-warrior. Like its well-meaning protagonist, Woman at War won't solve all the world's problems, but it's an original and compelling tale. After its première at Cannes last year, Jodie Foster announced her plan to direct and star in an American remake. As is so often the case with foreignlanguage gems, I urge you to see this one first. 3 1/2 National Post Woman at War opens March 15 in Toronto, March 22 in Ottawa, and March 29 in Montreal, with other cities to follow. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2019 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Graphic

Benedikt_Erlingsson Courtesy Of Mongrel Media; Halldora Geirharsdottir stars in Woman At War.;

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